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M-NCPPC, County Council and Chevy Chase Village Announce Joint Legacy Open Space Purchase

Together with the Montgomery County Council, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) Montgomery County Planning Board and Chevy Chase Village today announced they have purchased the Wohlfarth property as the Commission's second urban open space purchase under the Legacy Open Space program. The property consists of 10 lots with one existing house and is located on Western Avenue near Wisconsin Avenue adjacent to Chevy Chase Village. The property is identified as one of six urban open spaces for acquisition in the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan.

Terms of the purchase agreement are as follows: M-NCPPC will purchase the property from House of the Temple Historic Preservation Foundation, Inc., for \$5,000,000 using Legacy Open Space funds approved by the Montgomery County Council in two installments. The first installment purchase was completed on September 4, 2002, and the remainder of the property will be purchased shortly after July 1, 2003. The Village has agreed to reimburse the Commission for 25% of the purchase price, \$1,250,000, over the next nine years using Program Open Space funding from the State of Maryland and Village tax revenue.

As part of a signed Memorandum of Understanding among the County, M-NCPPC, and the Village, M-NCPPC will be responsible for operating and maintaining the property and Chevy Chase Village will provide municipal services to the property. The County also agreed to request that the property be annexed into the Village after the property has been completely purchased. A Management Plan will be developed jointly by M-NCPPC and the Village that will determine the use of the property as an urban open space according to the Legacy Open Space plan. The house on the property has a current occupant with an Estate of Years that provides for a life tenancy on the property, so the property will not be available for public use until the occupant has vacated the property.

“On behalf of the Montgomery County Planning Board and The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, we are pleased to have Chevy Chase Village as our partner in making the preservation of the Wohlfarth property possible,” said Derick P. Berlage, Montgomery County Planning Board Chairman. “This critical urban open space in one of our densely populated areas is now protected thanks to the support of the County Council and the cooperation of the Village. We look forward to protecting more critical open spaces in Montgomery County through such partnerships with municipalities, private organizations and individuals.”

Chevy Chase Village Board President Richard Rodin commented, “Chevy Chase Village greatly appreciates the foresight of the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Montgomery County Council in protecting this unique, urban green space from future development. Located at Montgomery County’s front door, the future park will stand as a tribute to such proactive thinking and an excellent example of how open space preservation can be a part of responsible land use development. Chevy Chase Village looks forward to working with the Montgomery County Planning Board to develop a management plan for the park that will serve as an amenity for all County residents to enjoy for many years to come”

“Green space within the Beltway is in short supply and is extremely important, particularly near Metro stops,” said Councilmember Howard Denis. “I’m delighted the County has seized the moment, working with the community, to obtain this valuable property.”

The Wohlfarth property is one of four Legacy Open Space properties being announced today. “These four acquisitions are real evidence of the strong commitment this County has made to preserving existing open spaces for our kids and our grandkids,” said Council President Steve Silverman. “That’s why the Council has stepped up to the plate to provide funding now for this vital purpose – before properties such as these are lost forever.”

Legacy Open Space is a bold, 10-year initiative proposed by the Planning Board and approved by the Montgomery County Council to conserve and steward land of exceptional value. The Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan identifies methods for protecting sensitive natural resources, water supply areas, heritage resources, greenways and trail connections, farmland and rural open space, and urban open space. Some resources may be purchased and added to the park system, while others may be protected through easement or public/private partnerships. Support for the initial phase will come from County general obligation and park bonds. Approximately 30 percent of future revenue is targeted to come from corporations, state and federal agencies, municipalities, and individual gifts to assure the land=s availability for future generations. The Commission has also partnered with the Montgomery Parks Foundation to coordinate private donations to the program.

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